

Commissioner Deborah A. Gist's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, January 13, 2012

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Attachments to this field memo:

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Today (January 13): Deadline for selection of [Instructional Management System](#) contacts

February 1: [Green Ribbon Schools](#) nomination deadline

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February 11: Statewide conference on [virtual learning](#)

June 30: Schools and districts submit [final personnel assignments](#)

Notes from Commissioner Gist:

1. RIDE to award grant for Innovation Powered by Technology

As I have noted to you in recent field memos, we are making a major commitment this year to exploring opportunities for innovation through virtual learning and other uses of technology. On Tuesday, we will announce a \$470,000 grant to support the redesign of a school that will use technology as the catalyst for transformation. Through a competitive-bid process based in part on need, we will award the grant to support a school that demonstrates a strong commitment to innovation powered by technology. All Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are eligible to apply for the grant, which the winning LEA can use to transform a school at any level (elementary, middle, or high school).

The LEAs that apply will propose a school site at which they will create a technology-rich learning environment that fundamentally rethinks and restructures teaching and learning through such initiatives as digital curriculum, gaming, 1:1 computing, virtual-learning environments, expanded learning opportunities, and flexible scheduling. This school would share its lessons learned across schools in the district and it would become a pilot program to help us launch a statewide initiative in innovations powered by technology.

The deadline application is March 23, and we will award the grant in the spring. The school would be expected to begin implementation during the next school year and to complete the process during the 2013-14 school year.

You can find details about applying for this grant on our website, at (to be posted Tuesday):

http://www.ride.ri.gov/OMP/VL/TechOps/1to1/1to1_home.aspx

In addition, to prepare schools and districts to submit the best possible proposals and to open up a statewide conversation on how technology can power innovation in our schools, we will hold a statewide conference on Innovation Powered by Technology on Saturday, **February 11**,

from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., at Rhode Island College, featuring a number of expert speakers from across the country as well as numerous breakout sessions.

I hope that you will select a team of teachers, technology directors, school leaders, school-committee members and other interested stakeholders from your district to join us at this conference.

You can find details about the conference, including the agenda and registration information, at (to be posted Tuesday):

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/OMP/VL/TechOps/1to1/2012conference.aspx>

I will continue to keep informed about this conference and this grant opportunity in field memos over the next several weeks.

2. Reminder: RIDE to hold meeting Thursday with superintendents on ESEA flexibility

As we prepare to submit to the U.S. Department of Education a request for flexibility under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) by the February 21 deadline, we are in the midst of extensive public outreach to gather input. We held well-attended public forums on ESEA flexibility on December 12 and January 9, as well as webinars for teachers, principals, and business leaders. We have also set up a dedicated e-mail address to receive written comments on ESEA flexibility:

ESEA.Flex@ride.ri.gov.

A draft of our flexibility request will be posted to the RIDE website (<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/eseaflex.aspx>) next week, at which point we will begin a second round of outreach to gather specific feedback on the draft.

As a reminder, RIDE will hold an informational meeting specifically for superintendents and/or assistant superintendents on **Thursday** (January 19), to present more detailed information regarding our request for flexibility and to receive your feedback. The meeting will take place from 8:30 - 10:30 a.m., at the New England Institute of Technology, Media Presentation Theater, 1408 Division Rd., East Greenwich. I hope you will be able to attend to share your thoughts and ideas.

3. RIDE to host expert speaker on Common Core standards

As we work together toward transition to the Common Core State Standards, we want to ensure that all of our teachers and school leaders as well as the community at large, understands the importance of the Common Core and how these new standards will increase the quality of instruction, improve student achievement, and better prepare our students for success.

To inspire an ongoing conversation about the Common Core, we have invited David Coleman, founder and CEO of Student Achievement Partners and one of the authors of the Common Core literacy standards, to come to Rhode Island for a series of presentations. Though the schedule is

still subject to change, please hold the date of Wednesday, **February 29**, at 12:30 p.m., for a session at which David Coleman will speak with all superintendents. We will also schedule other presentations throughout the day for principals and other education leaders, teachers, and for the public. I will provide you with more details as we set an agenda for David Coleman's visit. The day promises to offer some lively and thoughtful discussions about an issue that touches the lives of all Rhode Island educators and students.

4. Business leaders offer consulting services to districts

As I shared with RISSA members at our last two meetings, RIDE will be working with the business community to match school leaders with business leaders in our state in order to support relevant district projects, at no cost to the district. I have attached to this Field Memo a form to complete if you have a project in your district that would benefit from complimentary business consulting. Possible areas for this Expert Resource Bank Project might include leadership coaching, human-capital systems, infrastructure, communications, or strategic planning. The time commitment from the business expert for this project could range from a few hours to a few days. If you are interested in following up on this opportunity, please e-mail your completed form to nicole.shaffer@ride.ri.gov by February 3.

5. Scituate, Tiverton schools win USDA school challenge awards

We have received word from the U.S. Department of Agriculture that several more Rhode Island schools have earned U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) HealthierUS School Challenge Bronze Awards:

Scituate School District
Clayville Elementary School
Hope Elementary School
North Scituate School

Tiverton School District
Pocasset Elementary School

The award recognizes schools that have demonstrated a commitment to excellence in both nutrition and physical education to promote a healthier environment for children. Thanks to all who have worked so hard to achieve this national recognition. Congratulations to these award winners!

From RIDE:

6. RIDE releases update on transition to Common Core State Standards and on the Comprehensive Assessment System

Please see the following announcement from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

We are pleased to announce the release of the second Quarterly Update Memo sharing the highlights of the past quarter and looking ahead to next quarter for the Transition to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and for the Comprehensive Assessment System (CAS). Some highlights include:

- *New CCSS resources* for educators and administrators posted to the RIDE website, including one resource that strives to engage science educators in the CCSS for Literacy in Science through two interactive sessions:

www.ride.ri.gov/Instruction/CommonCoreMaterials.aspx.

- The Study of the Common Core State Standards workshops are continuing across the state. The sessions give educators throughout Rhode Island a common language for discussing and working with the Common Core. During the past quarter, more than 1,000 educators participated in 29 sessions. To date we have trained nearly 100 percent of our goal of 4,100 educators. *Thank you, educators, for your hard work!*
- The redesign of the *CAS website*, where you can access the full Guidance Document and Appendices:

www.ride.ri.gov/assessment/CAS.aspx.

- This site also contains recordings of the first six CAS webinars.
- Three exciting *CAS initiatives* are in development: the Formative Assessment Online Modules, the Interim Assessment System, and the Data Use Professional Development. Please see the Quarterly Update Memo for updates on each.

The memo can be viewed online at:

www.ride.ri.gov/Division-EEIE/DOCS/QuarterlyUpdates/FY12-Q2_CAS-CCSS_Quarterly_Memo.pdf.

Please visit our redesigned page on the RIDE website for more resources:

www.ride.ri.gov/Division-EEIE/transition.aspx

7. October 2011 NECAP results release schedule announced

Please see the following message from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

The results of the fall 2011 administration of the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) tests for grades 3 through 8 and 11 will soon be available to schools and districts. The planned release schedule is as follows:

February 1 (7 a.m.): Schools and districts will be able to access a password-protected site to download all fall 2011 NECAP results reports, including School and District Results Reports, School and District Summary Reports, Item Analysis Reports, Released Items and Support Materials documents, and the Guide to Using the 2011

NECAP Reports. Letters with user name and password information along with instructions for accessing the password protected NECAP results online will be mailed within the next two weeks.

Schools and districts will also have access to confidential student-level data files that contain demographics, scores, questionnaire results, and student performance on the released items.

Note: All summative results are embargoed until **February 9, at 10 a.m.**, and cannot be shared with the public until this date and time.

February 9 (10 a.m.): Non-confidential results will be made available to the public (non-confidential results are those that do not contain any student-level information). Additionally, schools and districts will no longer be required to provide a password to access the non-confidential results. Fall 2011 NECAP results information (including RIDE's annual fall NECAP results report) will be posted on the RIDE website at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment/results.aspx>

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Kevon Tucker-Seeley (kevon.tucker-seeley@ride.ri.gov), or 222-8494).

8. October 2011 NECAP results reporting workshops announced

Please see the following message from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

RIDE and Measured Progress will be conducting two live, in-person reporting workshops next month:

- February 13, at the Providence Marriott Downtown, 1 Orms St., 1 - 3:30 p.m.
- February 14, at Radisson Hotel Warwick, 2081 Post Rd., 9 - 11:30 a.m.

To register, go to:

<http://iregister.measuredprogress.org>

These workshops are designed for principals, superintendents, and any staff members who are directly involved with student data and analysis of results. The workshops will provide a review of the various NECAP reports and support materials and an overview of the Rhode Island Analysis and Reporting System, as well as an introduction to using data and interpreting NECAP results.

The content of these workshops will also be presented in two pre-recorded webinars that will be posted online, at <http://www.ride.ri.gov/assessment/Workshops.aspx>, when they become available (sometime after February 14). One webinar will focus on

NECAP reports and supporting materials, and the other will focus on the NECAP Analysis and Reporting System (the RIDE online interactive reporting tool).

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Kevon Tucker-Seeley (kevon.tucker-seeley@ride.ri.gov, or 222-8494).

9. Reminder: LEAs must submit weekly status update by today for the Teacher-Course-Student Milestone Tracking - Action Item

Please see this notice from our Division of Fiscal Integrity and Efficiencies:

As a reminder, all LEAs are being asked to submit weekly status updates regarding readiness to move forward with Teacher-Course-Student (TCS) data collection and to upload their TCS data if this is not yet complete. All TCS data uploads *must* be complete for the Roster Verification process to begin next month.

Weekly milestone updates are due Fridays at 6 p.m. via the TCS Milestone Tracking module on eRide, which can be accessed at www.eride.ri.gov. Your LEA's completion of the status updates will help RIDE to better support districts during TCS data collection, which began on January 3, and to respond quickly to any specific issues LEAs are experiencing in the TCS data-collection efforts.

Please make sure that your LEA's information is updated in the "TCS Milestone Tracking" module on eRide by 6 p.m. **today** (Friday, January 13). If you are unable to submit your TCS data, please include a note in the comments section explaining the difficulty and your estimated completion date. If you have any questions or need additional support during this process, please contact Betty Landry, at elizabeth.landry@ride.ri.gov.

10. Module 3 and Module 4 trainings for evaluators to begin in March

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

Module 3 for Personnel Evaluating Building Administrators is being offered eight times between March 6 and April 11. Module 4 for Personnel Evaluating Teachers is being offered 28 times between March 12 and April 25. Both trainings will focus on preparing for End-of-Year Conferences. Evaluators can register by going to the eRIDE Workshop calendar, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/applications/ridecalendar.aspx>.

11. RIDE to hold summer training academies for evaluators

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

RIDE will be hosting rigorous training academies over the course of the 2012 summer for personnel evaluating building administrators and personnel evaluating teachers. The academies will include direct instruction, problem-solving, and an application of

learning. Academies will build on the 2011-12 evaluation training modules. Below are descriptions of the Rhode Island Model-focused academies:

Academy for Personnel Evaluating Teachers: Four-day rigorous training seeking to prepare teacher evaluators to accurately observe practice, lead professional feedback conversations, set and approve Student Learning Objectives, and manage their evaluation schedules. During these four days, participants will be asked to practice observing, to develop actionable feedback, and to engage with the Educator Performance and Support System (EPSS).

Academy for Personnel Evaluating Building Administrators: Training will parallel the Academy for Personnel Evaluating Teachers. This training will prepare participants to conduct effective school site visits, lead professional feedback conversations, approve schoolwide Student Learning Objectives, and engage with the EPSS. The number of days for this training is to be determined and will take into consideration individuals who are responsible for evaluating both teachers and building administrators.

Please note that specific dates, locations, and registration information for both academies will be shared in an upcoming Field Memo.

12. RIDE posts additional guidance on Mid-Year Conferences

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

RIDE has developed additional guidance on Mid-Year Conferences, including strategies to address capacity concerns during gradual implementation of the educator-evaluation system. The Mid-Year Conference guidance document can be found at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/RIModelFAQ.aspx>.

From the U.S. Department of Education:

13. Education Secretary comments on NCLB and flexibility

Please see these excerpts from Education Secretary Arne Duncan's op-ed on the 10th anniversary of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act:

NCLB, for the first time, exposed achievement gaps and created a conversation about how to close them. The law has held schools accountable for the performance of all students - no matter their race, income level, English proficiency, or disability. Schools can no longer point to average scores while hiding an achievement gap that is morally unacceptable and economically unsustainable. But, NCLB has significant flaws. It created an artificial goal of proficiency that encourages states to set low standards to make it easier for students to meet the goal. The law's emphasis on test scores as a primary measure of school performance has narrowed the curriculum, and the one-size-fits-all accountability system has mislabeled schools as failures even if their students are demonstrating real academic growth. The law is overly prescriptive and doesn't allow

[school] districts to create improvement plans based on their unique needs. It also has not supported states as they create teacher evaluation systems that use multiple measures to identify highly effective teachers and support the instructional improvement of all teachers.

President Obama is offering states flexibility from NCLB in exchange for comprehensive plans to raise standards; to create fair, flexible, and focused accountability systems; and to improve systems for teacher and principal evaluation and support. This flexibility will not give states a pass on accountability. It will demand real reform. So far, 39 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have expressed interest in this flexibility. The Education Department is working with the first group of applicants.

Even as we work with states to offer flexibility from existing law, the Obama Administration will support a bipartisan effort by Congress to create a law that supports a well-rounded education while holding schools, districts, and states accountable for results. We all need to work together so that - 10 years from now - America's children will have the sort of federal education law they so richly deserve, one that challenges them to achieve to high standards and provides them with the highly effective teachers and principals who can prepare them for success in college and the workforce.

For more information, see:

<http://www.ed.gov/blog/2012/01/after-10-years-it%E2%80%99s-time-for-a-new-nclb/>.

14. Department issues reports on Year 1 of Race to the Top

Please see this message from the Office of Communications and Outreach:

This week the Department issued state-specific reports profiling first-year progress on the reforms underway in Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and the District of Columbia - the 12 states that secured Race to the Top funding in 2010 through the competition's initial two phases. These reports supply summaries of accomplishments made and setbacks experienced by states in pursuing reforms around Race to the Top's four assurance areas: raising academic standards, building robust data systems to improve instruction, supporting great teachers and leaders, and turning around lowest-achieving schools. Each report and progress achieved is unique to a state's plan, with some states using Year 1 to engage stakeholders, secure contracts, or establish key partnerships that will help implement large-scale reforms in Years 2 through 4 while other states have put into place new systems or policies that have reached districts or schools within their state. Throughout Year 1, the Department's Implementation and Support Unit partnered with states' teams to track progress and offer feedback, guidance, and overall support for their reform work. As state plans encountered delays and obstacles, the Department worked with grantees to thoroughly and thoughtfully review, deliberate, and approve changes to budgets and timelines that help states move forward with their Race to the Top plan.

For more information, see:

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/performance.html#state-reports>.

15. Districts asked to designate contact person for Civil Rights Data Collection

Please see this message from the U.S. Department of Education:

In preparation for the 2011-12 Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), a letter was sent last week to each district superintendent regarding the 2011-12 collection and asking them to designate a district contact person for all activities related to the 2011-12 CRDC. Copies of the letter may be found on the CRDC website (www.crdc2011.org) along with additional resources for districts and states to learn more about this important collection. Please feel free to contact the CRDC Partner Support Center (PSC) if you have any questions about the collection:

Telephone: 1-855-320-6459
Fax: 1-888-FAX-EDEN (1-888-329-3336)
TTY/TDD: 1-888-403-EDEN (1-888-403-3336)
EDEN_CRDC@ED.GOV

Other:

16. National Digital Learning Day scheduled for February 1

Please see this invitation from the Alliance for Excellent Education:

We invite you to join the more than 425,000 students and thousands of educators participating in the Alliance for Excellent Education's first-ever Digital Learning Day on Wednesday, February 1. Visit <http://www.digitallearningday.org/sign-up> to stay connected, get updates, and receive exclusive information on what you can do to support this effort by taking less than five minutes to sign up and join the wave of innovation and momentum that is building for this groundbreaking event.

This national awareness campaign is designed to celebrate innovative teachers and highlight instructional practices that strengthen and personalize learning for all students. The Digital Learning Day campaign explores how digital learning can provide teachers and students with the opportunities they deserve in an effort to build or become part of a workforce that is ready to succeed in college, a career, and life.

Celebrations and activities of all varieties are happening across the country at the state, district, and classroom levels. On Digital Learning Day, a virtual national town hall meeting will be held in Washington, D.C., along with a live webcast starting at 9 a.m. By developing these tools and hosting the first-ever national Digital Learning Day on February 1, the Alliance strives to build momentum for a wave of innovation that changes policies, shifts attitudes, and supports wide-scale adoption of these promising instructional practices nationwide.

To learn more about how to be a part of this groundbreaking event, sign up at <http://www.digitallearningday.org>. You can also “like” Digital Learning Day on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/NationalDigitalLearningDay> and follow the discussion on Twitter using the hashtag #DLDay.

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default.aspx>